

# VOICES FROM BEHIND WISCONSIN PRISON GATES

Issue 1, May 2016

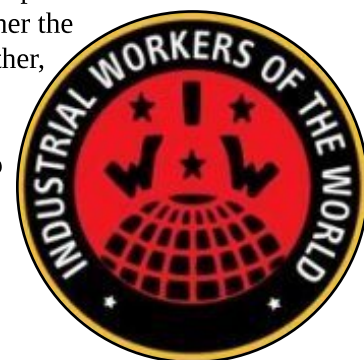


**"Once we are behind these walls its like we are dead until we resurface back to the streets like a second coming."**

-Incarcerated Worker at New Lisbon Correctional Institute

## AN INJURY TO ONE

This is a short newsletter for people incarcerated in Wisconsin, based as much as possible on what they are saying, it is edited and printed by Milwaukee branch of the Industrial Workers of the World, Incarcerated Worker Organizing Committee. Please write us back if you have updates you'd like to give to people on the inside and the outside. The more that people talk together the more they can make their demands together, and build our shared strength. We are in contact with networks of prisoners in areas outside of Wisconsin, and can help build those connections. Also please let us know if there are other people inside jails and prisons that we should contact. Write to the IWW at PO Box 342294, Milwaukee, WI, 53234.



## IS AN INJURY TO ALL

**"I believe that young black men have been industrialized and used to create jobs and opportunities for others. Prison was probably created to house the deviant and protect society but then it somehow morphed into a way to employ rural residents and improve their quality of life. They did and we suffered in the process."**

- Incarcerated Worker at New Lisbon Correctional Institute

**"In this Wisconsin Dept. of Correction we have to pay for an alleged co-pay each time we need to see a nurse, doctor, etc. Many walk around sick to avoid debt and so they can go to canteen."**

- Incarcerated Worker at Wisconsin Secure Program Facility



## WORKING CLASS SOLIDARITY

### Voices From Stanley Correctional Institute:

"Yes, the DOC does use us for for cheap labor. Especially the inmates that work for Badger State Industries. These guys make signs for the state and the prison only pays them at most one dollar an hour. What can we do? Most of us are just happy to have something to do regardless of what they pay us. I have worked within the prison system since I got here. The most I made was like 30c an hour!"

"You are absolutely right about how the prisons exploit family and friends out of money at much inflated prices than it would be on the street."

"I read a book once that called the prisoner system in America the industrialized prison complex because it's really about oppressing the minority population (all colors of people not just non-whites) for the profits they get from

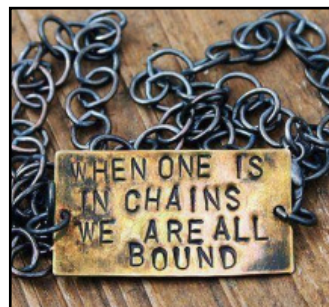
"... the prisons exploit family and friends out of money at much inflated prices than it would be on the street."



the tax payers and other businesses that cater to prisons nationwide. I agree with you that law enforcement is particularly bent on non-whites, but that shouldn't count whites out of the discussion! I am in the same boat as so many of the black, mexican, asian and other ethnic peoples who are in prison. In here I have a number just like everybody else."

### Voices From Oshkosh Correctional Institute:

"I'm fighting with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections Staff at Oshkosh Correctional Institution about some back pay owed to me for working on weekends, because the Segt who hired me threatened me with the risk of losing my job, if I refuse to work 7 days a week when the job was supposed to be only from Monday through Fridays."



## AGAINST PRISON SLAVERY

"I've always said the seventies were perhaps the most effective time for political activism. They were conscious of the mighty mammoth. Today, we lack blatant struggle. It takes bogus practices by militarized cops for true protest to commence. Even then, it only seems to be ephemeral."

### Voices From Red Granite Correctional Institute:

"Prison is tougher--it's an every day struggle for me. My parents can't afford to send me \$ or help me get a pair of shoes, tv, because my Dad is disabled Mom can barely pay the bills, so I don't even ask for help."

"It's crazy how we as a people can have so much power and potential, yet we only use it to hurt each other instead of becoming a force to change the world."

"I have worked within the prison system since I got here. The most I made was like 30c an hour!"

"Poverty is in the interest of the wealthy. Without it the wealthy are unable to solicit cheap labor for the "undignified" positions that you spoke of. And a lot of times, I don't believe that these politicians truly wish to declare a "War on Poverty". Social workers, police officers, judges, etc. depend on it. But I am fully with you on making a change - no matter how small. There just needs to be a sort of shift in what has become a social fact."

- Incarcerated Worker  
in Oshkosh Correctional  
Institute

"WI-DOC is trying to fool the public into believing that they are correcting things. But they are doing very little. We need to expose them."

-Incarcerated Worker at  
Wauapon Correctional  
Institution



#### Voices From Wauapon Correctional Institution:

"The penological community believe that by closing down the isolation units those prisoners are "shifting the balance of power." Therefore, the threat must be repressed and/or modified into conformity through "Behavior Control Therapy" or administrative confinement. Behavior Control Therapy deals with the literal brainwashing and enslavement of an individual's mind. It retrogresses the individual into the character role of a child and reinforces the need for paternal authority."

"These skullduggery and dilatory tactics illustrate that DOC (by facts and extrapolations) is not serious nor sincere in their words and will never be proactive in these issues of solitary confinement constraint. They will only make small window show changes to get the attention and focus off them and not to appear the only state out of the fad. Only if there is pressure and monitoring by society will they follow through."

"Right now I get \$4 every two weeks, after they take 10% off my account I have \$3.60 a total of \$8 a month. I spend that much, or close to, for laundry soap. Wash your own clothes in the sink in your room.... Without our help - kitchen, sweeping, showers - we help run the prison. Without us I'm not sure they'd work in certain parts of the prison."

"I witness mentally ill prisoners down the range decomping every day. One such elderly prisoner has been in AC (longterm segregation ) shipped here and there for over 20 years, since about 1998."

"WI-DOC is trying to fool the public into believing that they are correcting things. But they are doing very little. We need to expose them."

#### Voices From Green Bay Correctional Institute:

"No, I'm not treated well. It's prison. Inmates are not the problem. It's the food, the medical care, things like that."

"The political and economical structure our country is built on is a facade that offers a false sense of freedom and security.... Anybody can find themselves behind prison bars, I've heard some really sad stories the last couple of years. My own story pales in comparison to quite a few of them."

-Incarcerated Worker at  
Fox Lake Correctional Institute

"This system is something else. I've learned to appreciate the simplest of god's gifts. That's saying something in a place where instant coffee and noodles are considered luxuries."

"I hope all is good for those on the frontline fighting for change for the people."

"People here treat you like dogs."

#### Voices From Columbia Correctional Institute:

"There isn't anything within that wired fence or four walls that ever can or ever will bring me any measure of happiness....Every part of the day is the worst, but if I had to be specific I would say the wake up is the worst! Every day I have to overcome the initial shock but once I calm and the anxiety subsides I get by."

#### Voices From Taycheedah Correctional Institute:

"The care for medical and physical health is very poor. It's like if you don't push yourself to be/do better when it comes to your mental state you basically "will in fact lose your mind." The prison system is quick to medicate someone. Then in turn that individual becomes a zombie, just walking, not knowing stop from go."



# WHAT IS I.W.O.C.

Members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) have created the IWOC, the Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee, which functions as a liaison for prisoners to organize each other, unionize, and build solid bridges between prisoners on the inside and fellow workers on the outside. Prison is a setup, a big business, there to make money off the People. Neither the setup, nor the slavery inside of prisons can be combated without the conscious participation of prisoners and the working class on the outside through mutual aid, solidarity, and the building of working relationships that transcend prison walls and the politics of mass incarceration. The IWOC has been actively reaching out to prisoners while at the same time prisoners have been reaching out to the IWW for representation and assistance in building a prisoners union. The IWOC has taken up the cause and is helping prisoners in every facility organize and build a union branch for themselves, which will together form a powerful IWW Industrial Union.

**"... to truly change prison conditions prisoners must be organized and working towards such goals with the help and support of the working class on the outside."**



To achieve this cage slave/wage slave alliance the IWOC is accepting IWW membership applications from prisoners who agree with the IWW Constitution and believe that to truly change prison conditions prisoners must be organized and working towards such goals with the help and support of the working class on the outside. Prisoners will be full fledged members of the IWW with their own local prison branch to maintain and develop and will have the same rights and responsibilities of members on the outside. However, due the exploitative nature of the prison system, prisoners are granted free IWW membership, and will not be required to pay dues while in prison. Outside members of the IWOC will be in direct communication with prisoners and provide organizing training, support and guidance in union building, solidarity, and collaborative actions.

We have a world to win and nothing to lose but our chains. In every ghetto, barrio, trailer park, and prison cell, working class solidarity will prevail!

"Two issues stand out when reviewing incarceration rates for Wisconsin residents. First is that the United States has the highest number of incarcerated persons and the highest rate of incarceration in the world, according to international prison population databases. The total incarceration rate for the state of Wisconsin is similar to the U.S. Average. What makes Wisconsin unique is its exceptionally high rate of imprisonment for African American males. Wisconsin's African American male incarceration rate is the highest in the United States. In fact, the rate is 32% higher than the second worst ranking state (Oklahoma), according to the U.S. 2010 Census counts.

Given wide disparities in income among racial groups in Wisconsin and the intense levels of segregation in the Milwaukee metropolitan area, large numbers of ex-offenders released from Wisconsin correctional institutions reside in the poorest neighborhoods of Milwaukee – areas which have seen dramatic job losses and foreclosure actions during the economic recession."

- "Wisconsin's Mass Incarceration of African American Males" by Employment and Training Institute of University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013